

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE
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MEDIA NOTE

U.S. Department of State and World Environment Center Launch Pathways to Prosperity Innovation Challenge to Empower Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises in the Western Hemisphere

The U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs, in partnership with the World Environment Center (WEC), is pleased to announce open registration for the first Pathways to Prosperity in the Americas Innovation Challenge today, February 12, 2014.

Recognizing that small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) create the vast majority of new jobs in the Western Hemisphere but often struggle to grow and remain competitive in the global marketplace, the U.S. Department of State's Pathways Innovation Challenge will discover, field test, and reward solutions that have a proven track-record of successfully overcoming labor and environmental barriers to business. The Pathways Challenge is open to all individuals and organizations – non-profit organizations, private companies, or public entities – whose proposals feature at least one partner operating in a Pathways member country.

Entrants can register for the Pathways Innovation Challenge at challenge.wec.org by April 16, 2014. Applicants who meet eligibility requirements and qualifications will be invited to apply between March 12, 2014 and April 30, 2014. As many as four winners will each receive up to USD 500,000 and technical support to help them scale up or replicate their solutions.

“The Pathways to Prosperity in the Americas initiative has proven collaboration is the key to developing more lasting and inclusive solutions to shared regional challenges,” said Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs, Roberta S. Jacobson. “We look forward to building new partnerships through the Pathways Challenge to implement innovative solutions that will bring our societies more broadly shared prosperity.”

Dr. Terry F. Yosie, WEC's President & CEO, stated, “The Pathways Challenge represents a bold initiative to mobilize creative people and provide them with a platform to develop large scale solutions to societal needs in a sustainable manner. By integrating innovation opportunities with sustainable economic development, Pathways aims to incentivize small and medium-sized enterprises and communities to create prosperity and improve living standards through the exchange of knowledge, goods, and services.”

Additional information about the Pathways Innovation Challenge can be found at challenge.wec.org, and more information about WEC can be found at www.wec.org.

About Pathways to Prosperity

Pathways to Prosperity in the Americas is a policy-level dialogue that links 16 Western Hemisphere governments and societies that collectively seek to empower small businesses, facilitate trade and regional competitiveness, build a modern and inclusive workforce, and

encourage green, sustainable business practices. Pathways member countries currently include Belize, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Peru, Trinidad and Tobago, Uruguay, and the United States. Brazil has observer status. The Inter-American Development Bank, the Organization of American States, and the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean are strategic Pathways partners.

For more information, please contact Karin Sullivan at SullivanKB@state.gov or (202) 647-0614, or visit www.pathways-caminos.org.

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